

*Broadcasting Guidelines*

least 10 p.m. or 11 p.m. I feel there is an onus upon parents to see that children have retired by that time, and if there are adult people who wish to watch this type of program after the evening news, that is a decision for them to make. But a child might see in 30 minutes as much violence as most adults experience in a lifetime. It is easy for young minds to understand, because it is vivid and graphic, and above all it is cruel and is presented as a way of life. This leads me to say that no one is safe, adult or child, from the rising level of television-stimulated violence in our society.

Those of us who are careful and diligent enough, and conscientious enough, to regulate our children's television fare carefully and hence protect them from a great deal of violence, could very well find our children victims of violent young people whose parents are, indeed, not so conscientious and who abdicate this important aspect of parental responsibility. So in that regard no one is safe.

Not surprisingly, the introduction of television after the Second World War brought with it a controversy that closely resembled the previous discussions on radio, films and pulp fiction. This debate started in the United States in the early 1950's and grew increasingly animated throughout the next two decades. During that time, the Americans produced no less than four major government reports, dealing directly or indirectly with the subject of violence on television. These included the Kefauver Inquiry of 1954 on Juvenile Delinquency, the Dodd Surveys of 1961 and 1964, the Mass Media Task Force of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence of 1969, and the Report of the Surgeon-General on Television and Social Behaviour in 1972. Without fail, all of these documents concluded that there was too much violence on television.

Then, of course, the consensus of the research community is that the more people watch portrayals of violence on television the more likely they are to engage in aggressive behaviour. This applies especially to children. In this context, the term "aggressive behaviour" refers to acts ranging in severity from verbal abuse to criminal violence, and is best understood—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Order. I must interrupt the hon. member to tell him the time allotted to him has expired.

**Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take part in this debate in support of my hon. friend from St. John's East with a special feeling of pleasure and pride at being able to support in this Chamber the work of one I regard as the leader in this Chamber—there are others who participated—in advocating a form of regulation of sex and violence in public broadcasting. The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) is known for many things, not least of which is his eloquence, a quality which was displayed so well yesterday in the debate on national unity. He has a tremendous feeling for the atmosphere in which his children, and the children of others, can best grow.

[Mr. Harquail.]

● (1620)

I listened with interest to the hon. member for Restigouche (Mr. Harquail). I recall his work with the Canadian Association of Mayors and Municipalities. What the hon. member for St. John's East is trying to do by this bill is something which parents in Canada would like to see this parliament act upon, and act upon with despatch. I am very much discouraged by the intimation of the hon. member for St. John's East that the bill, which is meant to establish guidelines respecting the portrayal of sex and violence through the broadcasting programs, is not likely to receive second reading and referral to a committee. I say that especially in view of the tremendous amount of evidence that there is a damaging quality to the impressionable minds of children of tender years by what can be seen on the television screen.

I would hope that no one would interpret this bill as an act of censorship; it certainly is not that. But it is a bill which is intended to allow a body duly authorized by this parliament to establish guidelines. It is an attempt to allow evidence to be heard in order to establish some reasonable middle ground in terms of the obstruction of one's right to view what one wants, on the one hand, and the untrammelled right to view, on the other.

I do not think there is any doubt at all that the age of a person or child governs the impression that is made, whether for good or for evil. I think it is exceedingly important for us to remember that. While only the unbalanced might be affected by portrayals of sex or violence on television, if those unbalanced individuals are adults, there is sufficient evidence for us to be concerned about the effect of the portrayal of sex or violence on television on people of tender years—evidence enough that this parliament should act. It should not act willy-nilly, to stand upon rights or to obliterate rights; it should act to establish a way by which we can assure that, after sufficient public hearings, this industry, self-regulating though it says it tries to be, is in fact regulated in a reasonable but certain way for the public good.

I hope this bill will be acceptable to the House because it comes from the foundation of the hon. member's social conscience. In his general work in this area over a number of years he has been a leader, not just in this place but also perhaps in the country.

The other point about sex and violence on television and its impression on children of tender years is that it can give them nightmares. I have seen it in my own children and in children's friends. They told me about these things. It is not always a lasting condition, but it can be a hurtful one. It is certainly not a healthy one. That is the least that can be said for that kind of impression. But in terms of sex and one's value of life, it does lead to distortions at an age when impressions are made. From that point of view this parliament should at least be given the opportunity to discuss in some meaningful way the proposition of guidelines, and a debate is not the place to do that. Here we talk about general propositions. We have no opportunity to discuss and to view the evidence, and I think we should, as parliamentarians, at least have that opportunity.